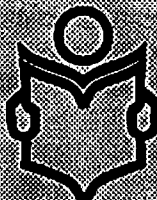


# Adult Literacy Contact Centre NEWSLETTER



December 1990

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A project of the Adult Basic Education Association of B.C.



1990

INTERNATIONAL LITERACY YEAR



## Business Council of B.C. Workplace Project

The Business Council of B.C., in cooperation with the National Literacy Secretariat, has hired a Workplace Literacy Coordinator to undertake a demonstration project to examine workplace literacy programs within the business community and address the training needs of the membership.

Maureen Palfreyman began work on the nine-month part-time project in October and will deliver a final report to the Council in June, 1991.

The Council has also convened a six-member advisory committee with representatives from government, education, business, labour and the literacy field to assist with the project. The committee held its first meeting on November 28 and will meet again on January 30, 1991.

Palfreyman is a private consultant in the field of human resource development and training and has an extensive background in the corrections field, the private industry sector and the academic arena. Formerly Associate Director of Business Client Studies, School of Business, British Columbia Institute of Technology, she holds a B.A. from the University of Alberta, and a Masters degree in Social Work. She is also a licensed B.C. family counsellor and has completed doctoral studies for a post graduate degree in Administrative Management.

The project's wide-ranging mandate includes:

- ◆ A Needs Assessment Survey of large B.C. corporations, identified by CEO's and personnel departments, with regard to literacy and basic skills training

- ◆ An inventory of learning resources
- ◆ Visits to sites where successful workplace literacy programs are in place
- ◆ Identification of possible pilot locations and implementation of three pilot programs in major companies early in 1991
- ◆ A semi-monthly newsletter to disseminate literacy "how-to" tools and methods

The survey, aimed at establishing the direction and priorities of the project, was sent to approximately 140 Council members in late October. The information obtained from the questionnaires is now being entered on a data base and the results will form the basis for Palfreyman's recommendations and final report.

According to the project's December newsletter, early response to the survey indicates a strong commitment within the business community to support for employee upgrading and training programs.

"The survey shows that industry is really committed," says Palfreyman. "Most of the respondents have recognized a need within their organizations and have been willing to make a time commitment."

She adds that some companies have been able to project the number of employees who would benefit from literacy training, and several have already offered to participate in pilot testing.

The survey polled companies on such questions as the

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*"Workplace" continued from page 1*

availability of in-house testing facilities, GED levels, what kinds of testing tools are currently in use, and the number of employees who might benefit from literacy/ESL training.

Part of Palfreyman's mandate is to collate detailed "how-to" material for the use of employers, unions, employees or institutions interested in duplicating or utilizing the successful ideas used by other projects. As well, results of the pilot programs will be shared in the form of an implementation guide, or "how-to" manual, for other employers.

Two issues of a newsletter -- called "Reading it Write" -- have been circulated among the Council membership to date. Future issues will contain listings of literacy problem "detection aids," training tools and counselling and encouragement techniques, and keep the membership informed on the progress of the project. Palfreyman plans to travel throughout the province beginning in January to meet with Council members and visit college regions. She will also make public presentations to employers, unions and service club groups as required.

Palfreyman says she looks forward to the challenge presented by the literacy project. "Our whole mandate is concerned with building an awareness of the growing importance of literacy among workers," she says.

Members of the project's advisory committee are:

(Chair) Keith Gray, Vice-President, Government Relations and Educational Services, Business Council of B.C.;

Wendy Carter, Regional Director, B.C. and Yukon Region, Department of Secretary of State;

Paul Gallagher, President, Vancouver Community College;

Shauna Grinke, Training and

Development Manager, Pan Pacific Hotel, Vancouver;

Linda Hackett, Coordinator, Adult Literacy Contact Centre;

Timothy Kerr, Corporate Vice-President, Lignum Ltd.;

Norma Kidd, Provincial Literacy Coordinator, Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology. □

## B.C. Fruit Growers Anticipate Literacy Needs

Vancouver Island literacy consultant Mary Alice Johnson has been contracted by the Open Learning Agency to conduct a needs assessment to determine how many B.C. fruit growers have the level of literacy and numeracy skills necessary to pass the pesticide applicator's examinations in 1992.

The study is being conducted for the Pesticide Literacy Committee of the B.C. Fruit Growers Association (B.C.F.G.A.) and supported jointly by Employment and Immigration Canada, the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology and the Industrial Adjustment Services Branch.

Johnson began work as Project Coordinator on November 27. The project's tentative completion date is February 20, 1991.

By January 1992 about 400 farmers in B.C. must have a Pesticide Applicators Certificate before they can buy, mix or apply pesticides. Of these, about 2000 live in the area to be surveyed -- the Okanagan, Similkameen and Kootenay Valleys. Farmers can be certified after passing a written examination which follows a two and a half day Ministry of Environment training course, or a home study course developed by the

Open Learning Institute. The home study course is written at approximately a Grade 10 reading level and, according to 1986 Census data, approximately 16% of adults over age 15 in the region have less than a Grade 9 education. In addition, says Johnson, the region includes a sizeable Portuguese and Punjabi segment, so English as a second language is also a factor.

Johnson says a mailout announcing the study - written in German, Portuguese and Punjabi - has been sent to 2000 farmers to alert them to the project.

"Part of the assessment procedure is to establish a profile of the kind of person who is at risk [of being unable to pass the test]," she explains. "The second stage is to make telephone contact with one out of every four growers in the region" (approximately 500 farmers). From this, and input received from the field, Johnson will establish the numbers who indicate they need help (expected to be about 100) and conduct face to face interviews with them beginning in January, 1991. The interviews will determine what kind of programs are needed and what resources are available in the community. Johnson adds that following the survey she will look for "innovative approaches" in her recommendations to the fruit growers.

Don Marson, Chairman of the B.C.F.G.A. Pesticide Literacy Committee, says the telephone and person to person interviews will help the BCFGA develop a profile of "who is able to write and pass the exam and who is not," and help determine the proportion of other factors - such as ESL - behind the problem. He calls the recommendations expected from the study "a remedial process."

Johnson says agencies such as the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture and Agriculture Canada feel the study is

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*"Fruit Growers" continued from page 2*  
timely and information gained from it will be useful.

"This kind of study is badly needed," she says. "These agencies recognize that the fruit growers are far-sighted in seeing the need and taking such decisive action." □

## Partnerships in Literacy: the Medical Profession

Three B.C. medical groups are promoting literacy services within their constituencies through mass distribution of an information card based on the "Learn to Read...Help Others to Read" literacy Public Awareness Campaign.

The B.C. Medical Association, the B.C. Association of Optometrists, and the British Columbia Pharmacists' Society have each received a supply of the cards, which display a reproduction of the "Learn to Read" four-colour poster (advertising the local and toll-free telephone numbers of the Contact Centre) and a literacy message targeted to each organization. The cards are being distributed by each association to its membership throughout the province.

The campaign is a product of last year's literacy Public Awareness Campaign, one of the 1989/90 cost-shared projects funded jointly by the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology and the National Literacy Secretariat. Campaign coordinator Doug McCall says the promotion was part of the campaign's "partnership activities."

"The aim was to help these professionals become more sensitive to the problem," says McCall. "All three groups were very interested in the campaign, and supportive, because literacy is an issue for them."

Ann Bamford, Coordinator of the BCMA's Council on Health Promotion, says the association received a supply of 28,000 cards and sent one each to 6,000 doctors in the province with a covering letter saying more were available on request. "Calls and inquiries are starting to come in now," she adds. She says the cards are intended "to raise awareness in the medical profession that literacy services exist -- that illiteracy is a problem. Doctors can look for it, and they can gently refer patients for help."

The B.C. Association of Optometrists received 56,000 cards and has distributed about half of them in a mailout to its membership. The British Columbia Pharmacists' Society has a supply of 14,000, and Mary Saylor, Director of Member Services, says they will be mailed to approximately 600 pharmacists in B.C. for display on pamphlet racks. □

## Second Literacy Materials Bulletin Available

The second issue of the Literacy Materials Bulletin (Fall, 1990), one of the 1990/91 cost-shared projects funded jointly by the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology and the National Literacy Secretariat, has been released.

The bulletin is a 12 - page selection of reviews of instructional materials for adult basic education. It was produced by a seven-member committee formed in 1989 to review and field test literacy materials. The first bulletin appeared in the spring of 1990. The new bulletin was mailed out in November to approximately 350 adult educators throughout B.C. Additional copies are available to anyone free of charge from the Contact Centre.

Materials reviewed in the new bulletin include:

- ◆ A series of biographies of well known Canadians
- ◆ A set of five books by Toronto adult learners
- ◆ A guide to B.C.'s legal system
- ◆ A resource book for math students
- ◆ Resource and work books on the history of the Alberta Metis
- ◆ A world history
- ◆ Practical math word problems
- ◆ A set of creative writing posters

The "Golden Oldie" reviewed in the current issue is *Lonely Child*, an illustrated short story about a young mother struggling with single parenthood written by an adult learner from a Toronto community-based reading centre and published in 1983.

The new bulletin contains more reviews of materials with Canadian content than the previous one, and includes more price information for teachers. The next issue will review computer software and materials designed for workplace literacy programs.

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### Adult Literacy Contact Centre Newsletter

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684-8520 Facsimile

The Adult Literacy Contact Centre is a project of the Adult Basic Education Association of B.C. and is jointly funded by the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology; and the National Literacy Secretariat.

The Centre welcomes receiving your literacy news by phone, fax or mail. We reserve the right to edit written submissions for the newsletter.

The newsletter is available free of charge to any individual or agency upon request.

*"Bulletin" continued from page 3*

All materials cited in the new bulletin are available on a loan basis for one month from:

Sally Coates-Crews  
Centre for Curriculum and  
Professional Development  
Fifth Floor, 1483 Douglas Street  
Victoria, B.C. V8W 3K4  
Phone: 387-9628  
Fax: 387-9142

Also, a complete and permanent collection of all materials recommended to date by the Literacy Materials Committee is available for viewing at the Contact Centre.

Joan Acosta, committee chairperson, says the committee welcomes submissions for the next bulletin.

Contact her at Capilano College, 2055 Purcell Way, North Vancouver, B.C., V7J 3H5. Phone: 986-3945. □

## Plain Language Workshop for Librarians

The Greater Vancouver Library Federation is sponsoring a workshop this February aimed at helping librarians write brochures and pamphlets in plain language.

"Get Your Message Across: Using Plain English in Library Handouts and Publications" will be held February 7, 1991 at the GVLF (#110 - 6545 Bonsor Avenue, Burnaby) from 9:00 a.m. to noon. The presenter of the workshop is Laurie Gould, a Basic Education instructor at King Edward Campus, Vancouver Community College.

Ron Clancy, GVLF President, says Gould will give a brief overview of the state of literacy in Canada, and present concepts and techniques for recognizing and developing materials that are easy to read. Participants

will be given the opportunity to use a readability formula and rewrite material from library pamphlets.

Cost is \$20.00 for employees of GVLF member libraries, and \$25.00 for non-member library employees. Registration is limited to 20. Contact Ron Clancy at 437-8441 or Marie-Luise Berryman, North Vancouver City Library, at 980-0581. □

## B.C. Student Essay in U.K. Exhibit

An essay on illiteracy by a Douglas College reading program student was selected recently as part of an International Literacy Year exhibit in Newcastle upon Tyne, England.

Shirley Duemo, a student in the I-CARE (Individual Community Adult Reading Education) program, submitted her essay, "Thoughts on Illiteracy," to the Right to Read exhibition, held at Newcastle's Central Library October 23 - November 5. The essay was part of a display of 30 panels of letters, drawings and photographs chosen from approximately 200 entries solicited from around the world to commemorate ILY.

Duemo's essay describes her childhood struggle with dyslexia and her efforts to mask her inability to read in front of teachers and friends. She credits her I-CARE tutor, Jean Herring, with encouraging her to enter the exhibit.

The written entries in the exhibit, which were received from countries such as Ghana, Kenya, Nairobi, South Africa, India, Fiji, Australia, New Zealand and Latin America, as well as Canada and the United States, were translated into English (if required) and displayed in three large scrapbooks. The collection is booked to travel throughout England until the end of March, 1991. □

## Message from the Contact Centre

### What's this?

The other newsletter that has been included with the ALCC Newsletter this month is a new publication of Literacy B.C., the society that was formed last March and connects community-based literacy groups throughout the province.

As part of the Adult Basic Education Association of B.C.'s close relationship with Literacy B.C., we will be including the Literacy B.C. news with alternate issues of the ALCC Newsletter, beginning this month.

Since the Literacy B.C. newsletter speaks to its own constituency of regional literacy groups, it will take the place of our "Literacy B.C. Update" section. The ALCC Newsletter will continue to report general news on literacy of interest to our wide readership made up of agencies and members from adult education, government, the public school system, the non-profit and community-based sector, libraries, the media, business, and the general public.

### ILY is over, but ...

Have you been hearing about "the decade of literacy"? There is no officially designated decade as such, but Unesco has issued a Plan of Action for 1990-2000, to promote the creation of a literate world by the end of the century. 1990 - International Literacy Year - marked the beginning of what is to become a ten year effort by Unesco to dramatically reduce illiteracy in the world. "ILY is not an isolated event, but an element in a comprehensive strategy for literacy. ILY is not a celebration but a summons to action." (Unesco [1990], Worldwide Action in Education.) Unesco has declared it will work to sustain the public and media interest in literacy generated during International Literacy Year. "Literacy cannot be allowed to become the problem of the Year, to be extensively reported and much discussed and then forgotten." (Unesco Literacy Document 25 C/71, September 1989.)

The Adult Literacy Contact Centre would like to extend seasons greetings to readers of the newsletter. We wish all of you a merry Christmas and a happy new year.

